

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Ohio?

There was no objection.

Mr. LATTA. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 6394, the Improving Broadband Access for Veterans Act of 2016.

Our veterans face unique and difficult challenges upon their return home from service, but access to broadband Internet service should not be one. Broadband access can help equip our veterans with the tools necessary to be successful in today's 21st century economy, and that is why I urge all of my colleagues to support this commonsense, nonpartisan bill.

H.R. 6394 simply requires the Federal Communications Commission to submit a report to Congress on ways to better improve access to broadband for our Nation's veterans; in particular, low-income veterans and veterans living in rural areas.

We as legislators will be able to make better informed policy decisions based upon the recommendations made in the report and, thereby, help ensure our veterans have access to such a fundamental tool in today's economy. I urge my colleagues to vote "yes" on H.R. 6394.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WELCH. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 6394, the Improving Broadband Access for Veterans Act of 2016.

I thank my colleagues, Mr. MCNERNEY, who will be speaking very shortly, and Mr. KINZINGER, both colleagues on the Energy and Commerce Committee with myself and Mr. LATTA. Both of them have had a focus on how the Internet with be helpful to veterans. Obviously, Internet is really helpful to all of us, but veterans have some special challenges, and we have a special obligation to veterans.

This legislation is absolutely focused on the obligation that we have to try to help our veterans have access to the Internet. That is especially important in rural areas, something very close to the heart of Mr. LATTA and me.

Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from California (Mr. MCNERNEY), the cosponsor of this bill with Mr. KINZINGER, and a wonderful colleague on the Energy and Commerce Committee.

Mr. MCNERNEY. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Vermont for his work on this, and my colleague from Ohio, and also Mr. KINZINGER from Illinois for his work.

My bill, H.R. 6394, sets us on a path of working to close the digital divide for veterans. Access to broadband Internet service provides an important resource for the more than 20 million veterans across our Nation, with the highest population residing in my State of California.

Having a broadband Internet connection helps veterans apply for jobs more

easily, obtain necessary vocational training, and communicate with friends and family. It lets them keep up with current events. It gives them access to healthcare services. And they can get important information about their benefits and military records. Without broadband Internet access, it is difficult to fully participate in today's society.

Veterans face many challenges when they return home. Not having Internet access makes what is already an incredibly tough transition process even harder. This is particularly likely to be the case for low-income veterans and veterans living in rural areas.

Although we lack data on the number of veterans with broadband Internet access, the U.S. Census Bureau and the Pew Research Center both report that broadband adoption rates are significantly lower among Americans who live at or below the Federal poverty level.

An analysis by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration at the U.S. Department of Commerce further finds that broadband adoption rates in rural areas of the country are lower than they are in urban areas.

We must find ways to ensure that veterans, especially the more than 1.4 million living below the Federal poverty level and the 5.3 million residing in rural areas, are not left behind. This is why my bill directs the Federal Communications Commission to examine the current state of broadband access for veterans and what can be done to increase access, with a focus on low-income veterans and veterans residing in rural areas. The findings and recommendations from the report will be important for paving the way to get more veterans connected.

Again, I want to thank my cosponsor, Mr. KINZINGER, for his support, and I urge my colleagues to vote for the bill.

Mr. WELCH. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. LATTA. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, there are more than 20 million veterans across the Nation, and every single one of them deserves access to broadband Internet. This bill can help give Congress the information it needs to help improve the lives of our veterans, and I urge all of my colleagues for their support of the gentleman's legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 6394, the Improving Broadband Access for Veterans Act of 2016.

The First District of Georgia is blessed to be home to four of our military's fantastic installations and more importantly, to the great men and women who choose to serve our country.

Our military's greatest strength is found in those individuals who have chosen to defend our freedoms and our values.

Those veterans bring a wealth of information and experience to the civilian sector that benefits innovation and those who are exposed to it.

This bill requires the FCC to submit to Congress a report on the promotion of broadband access for veterans with a focus on low-income veterans and those living in rural areas.

By ensuring those veterans have access to high-speed broadband, that determination and hard-working spirit found in so many veterans that I've met can be fostered and grown.

I want to thank Congressman MCNERNEY, Congressman KINZINGER and the rest of the Energy and Commerce Committee for their hard work on such an important issue for the growth of our veteran community.

I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. LATTA) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 6394.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. LATTA. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

EXPRESSING SENSE OF HOUSE THAT ACCESS TO DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS TOOLS AND CONNECTIVITY IS NECESSARY TO PREPARE YOUTH

Mr. LATTA. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 939) expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that access to digital communications tools and connectivity is necessary to prepare youth in the United States to compete in the 21st century economy.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 939

Whereas the United States should lead the world in providing high-quality education and opportunities to its citizens;

Whereas digital skills are essential for education and preparing citizens for the economy of the future;

Whereas, on a daily basis, teachers across the country assign homework that requires Internet access to be completed;

Whereas there are 5,000,000 households with school-age children in the United States that do not have high-speed Internet access at home and fall into what is known as the "homework gap";

Whereas a disproportionate number of students without high-speed Internet access at home reside in low-income and minority households;

Whereas students and families in rural areas face additional challenges when homework requires Internet access that is out of reach;

Whereas every student deserves an opportunity at 21st century success;

Whereas participation in the classroom can be improved when all students are equipped with the tools to complete their homework;

Whereas educators can increase the use of cutting-edge education technology and digital learning resources when those resources

remain accessible during out-of-school hours;

Whereas data show that students have received lower grades and been unable to complete their assignments because of their lack of Internet access at home;

Whereas improved student access to postsecondary education and workforce opportunities can be made possible by increasing the ability of students to apply for employment, postsecondary education, and financial aid opportunities;

Whereas leaders in the public and private sectors have recognized that the homework gap is an issue of national importance and partnered to find cooperative solutions to address it; and

Whereas instilling digital skills and the knowledge to succeed in the 21st century economy in the Nation's students is vital to the Nation's global competitiveness: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That it is the sense of the House of Representatives that access to digital communications tools and connectivity is necessary to prepare youth in the United States to compete in the 21st century economy.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. LATTA) and the gentleman from Vermont (Mr. WELCH) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Ohio.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LATTA. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and insert extraneous materials in the RECORD on the resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Ohio?

There was no objection.

Mr. LATTA. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, again, I am pleased to support another resolution from our colleagues from across the aisle.

Broadband and the Internet have become nearly indispensable parts of our 21st century economy. Whether it is bringing the world's information to your fingertips or connecting you to people around the world, it is increasingly clear that improved access to the Internet is a vital part of our digital future, and particularly so for our Nation's children.

This resolution affirms the commitment of the House of Representatives to ensuring all Americans, particularly students, have the tools they need to succeed. As members of the Subcommittee on Communications and Technology, Democrats and Republicans alike firmly espouse the goal of bringing broadband access to all children of the United States.

I thank the gentleman from Vermont for shining a light on this important issue, and I urge my colleagues to vote "yes" on H. Res. 939.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WELCH. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, here is the situation: our kids are going to school, they are

getting homework, and 70 percent of the teachers assign homework that presumes access to the Internet, but many of our kids don't have access to the Internet.

About 5 million, or one-third of households with school age children in the U.S., lack a high-speed connection at home. That is the "homework gap." It creates a lot of anxiety, as well as some inability to get the homework done. And the anxiety for these kids is that they go home, they have got an assignment, they want to do it, and they don't have the tools. It puts enormous pressure on the parents.

We have seen some reports where, in order to address this outside of the school, they will park buses that have high-speed Internet access, and the parents will bring the kids back to school and sit outside while the kids sit on the bus where they have the homework connection.

That is asking a lot of our parents, it is asking a lot of our kids, and this resolution is just acknowledging what I think we all know is the obvious. That is, if kids are going to have a shot at getting ahead, if they are going to be able to do their homework, we have got to get that Internet access out in the area so we don't have 5 million kids without it.

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It is such a real problem when you get into the rural areas, and that is where Mr. LATTA and I know that, and the reason is because extending the broadband out into the rural areas is economically more of a challenge for some of our companies.

We believe that, ultimately, we have got to have Internet access, much like we did with electricity, where we make a policy that says we are getting that broadband to the last mile. This resolution demonstrates an ongoing bipartisan commitment to achieve that goal. I know, Mr. Speaker, you have a lot of rural areas in your district as well.

I urge my colleagues to support this, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. LATTA. Mr. Speaker, again, I thank the gentleman from Vermont. I know we have worked for well over a year now on rural issues on the committee, and I appreciate his leadership on that. I also thank the gentleman for working across the aisle with us to highlight this important need.

American students must have every tool to prepare themselves for an increasingly competitive future, and I hope that my colleagues will join me in support of this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of this resolution, which would express the sense of the House of Representatives that students everywhere should have access to digital tools that will help to further their education in the 21st century economy.

This resolution expresses the sense of the House that the United States should be leading the world in proving the digital tools necessary to succeed and create new opportunities.

Nearly 5 million households in the United States do not have high-speed internet, meaning those households don't have access to an increasingly important aspect of a modern education.

By increasing access to millions of children around the country, we take a step forward in promoting a 21st century education.

This would also improve the global competitiveness of the United States as countries around the world increasingly promote broadband access in their educational systems.

I look forward to working with my colleagues to expand possibilities for children and to create an environment in which we can incentivize growth and new opportunities.

I thank the Energy and Commerce Committee and Congressman WELCH for their hard work and diligence on this issue.

I urge my colleagues to support this resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. LATTA) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 939.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. LATTA. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

EXPRESSING SENSE OF HOUSE WITH RESPECT TO THIRD-PARTY CHARGES ON CONSUMER TELEPHONE BILLS

Mr. LATTA. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 932) expressing the sense of the House of Representatives with respect to third-party charges on consumer telephone bills.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 932

Whereas telephone companies are required to permit third parties to bill for services on a consumer's monthly telephone bill in certain circumstances;

Whereas "cramming" is the act of placing unauthorized charges on a wireline, wireless, or bundled services telephone bill of a consumer;

Whereas the Federal Communications Commission estimates that cramming has harmed tens of millions of people in the United States; and

Whereas existing protections against cramming have not prevented harm to consumers: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That it is the sense of the House of Representatives that protections against cramming should be improved and consumers should be empowered to stop unwanted third-party charges on their telephone bills.